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Eighth meeting of the Technical Preparatory Committee of the Whole

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
13 - 20 April 1987

Item 7 of the provisional agenda*

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Twenty-second session of the Commission/ thirteenth meeting of the Conference of Ministers

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
23 - 27 April 1987

Item 6 of the provisional agenda**

REPORT OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL MEETING ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLICY ASPECTS OF WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT IN AFRICA

Executive Summary

* E/ECA/TPCW.8/1.
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1. The Regional Meeting on Social-Economic and Policy Aspects of Water Resources Management in Africa was organized jointly by the secretariat of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Other organizations of the United Nations system particularly the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the United Nations Department of Technical Co-operation for Development (DTCD), the World Bank, the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and the United Nations Department of International Economic and Social Affairs (DIESA) collaborated in providing technical and financial support. The meeting was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 2 to 6 June 1986.

2. Participants from 18 countries in Africa and 11 organizations of the United Nations system attended the meeting.

3. The objective of the meeting was to provide a regional perspective on the problems and constraints facing African countries in the development and management of their water resources; to make recommendations for a new strategy to be adopted to channel resources into priority areas and to build up national capabilities to accelerated water resources development programmes for the social and economic benefit of the people of Africa.

4. It was also intended:

(a) To provide a forum for various governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies operating within Africa to exchange ideas on problems and constraints in water resources development and to search for a rational approach to water resources management for the socio-economic development of African nations;

(b) To create an interaction between the major groups of participants that will enable ways to be found of avoiding duplication in programmed activities;

(c) To help bridge the gap that exists between educationalists, researchers and practitioners in the field of water resources (as one group) and national planners, decision makers and policy makers (as the other group), by bringing them together to exchange ideas on common problems; and

(d) To highlight some of the past recommendations of United Nations Conferences and meetings which may have been overlooked and to encourage their implementation by member countries.

5. The meeting dwelt on four major themes namely:

(a) Planning and management of water resources and their assessment;

(b) Education, training and research;

(c) Role of water resources in national socio-economic development; and

(d) Environmental and health consideration.

On these themes, keynote speakers addressed the meeting, providing a comprehensive analysis in the subject areass in the context of Africa's future social and economic development.

6. Country representatives made presentations outlining the efforts made in their respective countries for implementing the Mar del Plata Action Plan and attaining the progress made nearly 10 years after the United Nations Water Conference and the constraints faced in accelerating water resources development activities. The presentations on the experience of country representatives highlighted on the diverse and varied nature of problems faced. Some of these problems were indicated to be induced by the global economic, social and political, environmental and natural calamities while others were related to policy, planning, institutional, financial, manpower, and technical issues. In the final analysis, the presentations revealed that there has not been any significant progress in the sector as a whole.

7. Considering the efforts so far made by countries in Africa, and the constraints faced in the implementation of the Mar del Plata Action Plan, a broad range of action recommendations are drawn up covering the whole spectrum of activities involved in the development and management of water resources, pertaining to the four major themes mentioned above including isues concerning future regional co-operation activities.